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Hearing the Voices of Youth:

Youth Participation in Selected Canadian Municipalities

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Hearing The Voices of Youth

Youth Participation in Selected Canadian Municipalities

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Executive summary

Previous research on the attitudes of youth has identified a number of issues of concern to young people including self-esteem, peers and social relationships, family violence, sexuality, and experiences at school. Two themes are consistently reported in the literature on youth concerns. First, young people want to be listened to, treated with respect and taken seriously by adults. Second, they want to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. In Canada, various agencies have been involved in promoting youth participation. Health Canada has identified youth participation as a key component in the healthy development of young people.

This study was designed to gather information on what is currently going on in Canadian communities with respect to youth participation. It was intended as a way of learning from people's experiences with youth participation and hearing their assessment of "what works." One objective of this study was to identify 3 or 4 "best practices" models of youth participation. A decision was made to focus on youth participation at the municipal level since these government structures are close to the communities they serve and provide services which cut across various sectors of concern to youth. The following key questions were explored in this study:

- What are the most important concerns currently being expressed by young people in your community?
- How does your community identify the concerns of its young people?
- Do young people from all sectors of the youth population, including marginal and high risk youth, have an opportunity to participate?
- What would be the best way of involving young people in your community?

Methodology

This study was based on a three step research process consisting of the following:

- A literature review of relevant Canadian materials.
- In-depth telephone interviews with knowledgeable individuals in thirty communities across the country. A total of 52 interviews were completed with municipal officials, representatives of youth serving agencies and police officers familiar with police-based youth initiatives.
- Site visits to fifteen communities with interviews and focus group sessions being held with young people, municipal officials, police officers and representatives of youth serving agencies.

Findings:

What are the most important concerns currently being expressed by young people in your community?

- both adults and youth report that young people have nothing to do
- concerns about the future and getting a job were common
- youth feel they have no where to go and that they get "hassled" in stores, coffee shops, on the street and in malls
- concerns were expressed about the negative image society has of youth

How does your community identify the concerns of its young people?

- youth voices are not heard in many communities
- there are few systematic opportunities for identifying youth concerns
- surveys, needs assessments and forums are used as to identify youth concerns
- most agencies rely on front-line staff to identify youth concerns

Do young people from all sectors of the youth population including marginal and high risk youth have an opportunity to participate?

- participation and involvement mean different things to different young people
- those interested in being heard and getting involved usually find a way
- communities have difficulty involving marginal youth and youth from various ethnic and cultural groups

What would be the best way of involving young people in your community?

- many argued that the community level is key
- issues must be "real" for people to get involved
- the need for interagency support for youth participation was noted
- the political level was seen as crucial for legitimizing youth participation
- many argued that a multi-level approach was required which includes community, interagency and political level support

Conclusions:

This study was designed to identify three or four "best practices" models of youth participation and involvement. While such models may exist in theory, a more complex set of structures and processes was found in the communities that participated in this study. Young people often find it difficult to get their concerns heard. While some formal opportunities exist for youth involvement at the municipal level, considerable frustration was found with the lack of progress made on youth issues. Most respondents agreed that a combination of local, interagency and political level involvement were required for a successful and sustainable youth participation strategy. Many also felt that youth leaders should be identified and encouraged to participate with support and mentoring by "youth friendly" adults.

Introduction

Previous research on the attitudes of youth has identified a number of issues of concern to young people including self-esteem, peers and social relationships, family violence, sexuality, and experiences at school. In addition, the following two themes are consistently reported in the literature on youth concerns. First, young people want to be listened to, treated with respect and taken seriously by adults. Second, they want to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

The literature in this area indicates that the issue of youth participation is of growing importance for service providers and policy makers alike. For example, Health Canada has identified youth participation as a key component in the healthy development of young people. The federal government's National Children's Agenda also notes the significance of involving young people in policy and program development as well as in the design and delivery of services for youth.

The significance of youth participation is also evident in such international documents as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The following provision of this international agreement makes explicit the rights young people have to be heard and to take part in decisions that affect them: "States Parties shall assure to the child (0 - 18) who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

In Canada, various agencies have been involved in promoting youth participation. For example, the Canadian Mental Health Association has made a significant contribution through a series of booklets which present useful information on how to implement youth participation, including a consideration of the barriers and challenges that exist. The work of Youth Participation/Participation Jeunesse is another example of efforts already underway. The goals of this organization include developing materials for "trainers" who, in turn, train youth-serving, non-governmental organizations in how to involve young people in a meaningful way. These are only two of the many examples of existing youth participation efforts.

The Purpose of this Study:

This study was designed to gather information on what is currently going on in Canadian communities with respect to youth participation. It was intended as a way of learning from people's experiences with youth participation and hearing their assessment of "what works." A main objective of this study was to identify 3 or 4 "best practices" models which could be used in subsequent work on youth participation.

Three particular issues were highlighted in the planning of this research project. First, some attention was directed at determining whether opportunities for youth participation are systemic and sustainable. The existing literature indicated that few communities in Canada have an infrastructure which makes youth participation a normal and routine part of daily life. In many communities, programs are developed which incorporate youth participation as an ideal. Once a program or project ends, however, the youth participation component also ends. Few systemic, institutionalized opportunities exist for young people to make their concerns known to decision makers and to participate in the development and delivery of services intended for them.

In order to address this issue, an important part of this project consisted of assessing the impact that municipal involvement has on the existence and sustainability of youth participation opportunities. This decision was made because municipal government structures are close to the communities they serve and provide services which cut across various sectors of concern to youth. It was hypothesized that youth participation opportunities would be more systemic and sustainable if they were incorporated into the municipal structure. Opportunities for youth participation in the municipal structure includes such things as Mayor's Youth Advisory Committees as well as youth participation on formal municipal committees and boards such as those dealing with transportation, parks and recreation, and public safety.

A second issue of concern in this study was determining whether young people from all sectors of the youth population have an opportunity to express their concerns and to participate in decisions affecting them. Particular emphasis here was placed on assessing whether marginal or high risk youth have opportunities to participate since these young people often find it difficult to have their voices heard.

Finally, some attention was directed to communication processes and how different communities identify the concerns of their young people. Specifically, information was sought on how adult decision makers obtain information on what is of concern to young people in their communities. Information was also collected on the way in which information is provided to young people.

Methodology

This study was based on a three step research process. The first step involved reviewing relevant Canadian materials in order to identify the types of components that might be included in "best practices" models of youth participation. Information derived from the literature review was used in the development of an interview guide for this study.

The second step involved in-depth telephone interviews with knowledgeable individuals in different types of communities across the country. These individuals included municipal officials, representatives of youth serving agencies and police officers familiar with police-based youth initiatives such as School Resource Officer programs.

In order to facilitate this part of the project, discussions were held with representatives of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Crime Prevention and Victim Services Section). Both organizations assisted in this study in a variety of ways. For their part, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities helped with the identification of appropriate communities while the R.C.M.P. provided access to key individuals familiar with youth issues in their jurisdictions.

Thirty communities were selected for inclusion in this stage of the study. In order to ensure regional representation, six communities were included from each of the five federal regions (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, Pacific). Both large and small communities were selected and an effort was made to include urban and rural centres as well as some Northern communities. Two interviews were planned for each of these communities: one with a representative of the municipality - including youth-serving agencies in some cases; and one with a representative of the local police service.

We also wanted to include some communities which had formal youth participation processes operating at the municipal level as well as some that did not have such processes in place. In order to do this, we examined the findings from a recent Federation of Canadian Municipalities study on crime prevention since it helped us to identify communities where there was an interest in youth issues at the municipal level. We also used information contained in a recent Canadian Council on Social Development report entitled *The Progress of Canada's Children - 1999*. This report identified a number of communities that had municipal-level youth participation initiatives underway. We included some of the communities on this list, as well as some from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities study in order to include municipalities with a range of experiences. The list of communities included in the telephone interviews is presented in Appendix A.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities provided the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the Mayors from the communities that were selected. A letter was sent to each of the respective Mayors, inviting them to participate in the project and asking them to identify an individual who could participate in a telephone interview. We asked that this individual be

familiar with youth participation issues in the community. These individuals were then contacted and an interview was scheduled at a mutually convenient time.

A letter was also sent to the Chief of Police (Detachment Commander) in each of the communities selected for this study. The names and addresses of these individuals was found in a publication entitled *Selected Administrative Characteristics of Municipal Police Departments* (Statistics Canada, 1994). The Chiefs were sent a letter inviting them to participate in the project and asking them to identify an individual who could participate in a telephone interview. Once again, we asked that this be an individual who was familiar with youth participation issues in their organization. These individuals were then contacted and an interview was scheduled at a mutually convenient time.

Additionally, contact with the Crime Prevention and Victim Services Section of the R.C.M.P. resulted in an invitation to a national conference for Victims Services Co-ordinators and R.C.M.P. officers working in this area. The conference was held in Surrey, British Columbia, in late September, 1998, before the telephone interviews began. This afforded us an opportunity to explore youth participation issues and to pre-test the interview guide with a knowledgeable audience since these individuals are familiar with youth issues in their communities. The conference participants were asked to complete a questionnaire which included many of the items in the interview guide. They were then invited to take part in a group discussion on youth participation. Interviews were also held with individual conference participants in order to debrief with them about the interview guide and to explore some of the issues raised during the group discussion.

The third step in this study involved selecting fifteen of the thirty communities on the interview list for site visits. In this case, three communities were selected from each of the five federal regions. Sites were identified on the basis of the criteria developed during the literature review and interview stages. Once again, we wanted to include sites of different sizes and in different parts of the country, including both rural and urban centres as well as some Northern communities. We also wanted to include sites with varying degrees of experience with youth participation. Information gathered during the interviews was used in deciding which communities to visit. The list of communities selected for site visits is presented in Appendix A.

During the site visits, two data collection strategies were employed. First, interviews were conducted with young people, municipal officials, police officers and representatives from youth serving agencies, to explore the findings and issues that arose during the telephone interviews. Second, key informants in each community were asked to invite young people to participate in a focus group session. They were asked specifically to invite young people from different segments of the youth population in these communities.

Findings

Telephone interviews were completed with fifty-two individuals including twenty-seven municipal representatives and twenty-five police officers. The telephone interviews lasted from thirty to sixty minutes. Three municipal representatives and five police officers either declined our offer to participate or were unavailable after repeated attempts to contact them. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in analyzing the results of the telephone interviews. For example, some of the data was used in the creation of the tables presented below. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to generate these tables. The qualitative information was analysed using standard qualitative techniques.

Site visits were conducted in fifteen communities which involved interviews and focus group sessions with young people, municipal representatives, police officers and representatives of youth-serving agencies. Qualitative analyses were conducted with these data.

The findings from both the telephone interviews and site visits are presented in this report according to the following key issues explored during this study:

1. **Youth Concerns**
   What are the three most important concerns currently being expressed by young people in your community?

2. **Communication**
   How does your community identify the concerns of its young people?

3. **Participation**
   Do young people in your community have a way of participating in the decisions that affect them?

4. **Inclusion**
   Do you involve young people from different segments of the youth population in your community?

5. **Ideal Model**
   What would be the best way of involving young people in your community?

1. Youth Concerns

1a. Exploring adult and youth perceptions of "nothing to do."

While the primary focus of this study was to identify three or four "best practices" models of youth participation, it became evident early on that this issue was part of a much larger question. The telephone interviews and site visit data indicated that the question of youth involvement and participation revolves around the issues of how young people get heard and what opportunities exist for them to do something about their concerns. Information was gathered from respondents during all data collection activities - telephone interviews, face to face interviews and focus group sessions - about what the respondents considered to be the three most important concerns of young people in their communities. Answers to this question gathered during the telephone interviews are depicted in Table 1 below.

Table 1 shows that having "nothing to do" was mentioned first by 41.2% of those answering this question. This is more than twice as many as the second most frequent response in this category, "future/jobs" which was mentioned first by 19.6% of the respondents. This was followed by "crime/violence" mentioned first by 11.8% and "respect/being heard" which was mentioned first by 11.5% of those responding.

Table 1:
The Three Most Important Concerns of Youth Identified By Respondents

Youth Concerns	1st Concern Mentioned	2nd Concern Mentioned	3rd Concern Mentioned
1. Nothing to do	41.2%	18.0%	10.4%
2. Nowhere to go (place)	3.8%	8.0%	6.2%
3. Money	2.0%	6.0%	2.1%
4. Drugs/alcohol	5.8%	10.0%	8.3%
5. Crime/violence	11.8%	10.0%	14.6%
6. Future/jobs	19.6%	20.0%	16.7%
7. Education related	2.0%	2.0%	6.3%
8. Respect/being heard	11.8%	12.0%	14.6%
9. Other	2.0%	14.0%	20.8%
Total	100% N=51	100% N=50	100% N=48

The concern mentioned second most frequently was "future/jobs" noted by 20.0% of the respondents followed by 18.0 % who mentioned "nothing to do" second, and 14.0% who mentioned "other" things second. The final column in Table 1 presents concerns mentioned third by respondents. The most common responses in this column were "other" with 20.0% of the respondents mentioning this third, followed by "future/jobs" with 16.7% and both "crime/violence" and "respect/being heard" being identified third by 14.6% of the respondents.

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that adults perceive "nothing to do" as the most important concern of youth. These findings were then compared with information gathered during the site visits. Here, "nothing to do" was also mentioned most frequently by both individuals that were interviewed and focus group participants. Interestingly, this was the most frequent response by youth, municipal representatives and police officers. Moreover, these responses were the same in both larger and smaller centres.

The issue of having nothing to do was seen as more complex than this simple statement would imply. Many of the service providers indicated during both the site visits and telephone interviews that there were in fact a lot of things for young people to do in their communities. During several site visit interviews, municipal representatives provided us with "thick" brochures outlining an extensive and impressive array of things for young people to do. They also acknowledged, however, that these consisted mainly of traditional, athletic pursuits such as hockey, baseball, swimming and soccer. There was little available in the way of alternative recreation or cultural activities such as music, art and dance.

A number of people we spoke with were working on making more alternative types of activities available to young people in their communities. Some were experimenting with "drop-in" strategies which don't require young people to make a long term commitment as is the case with the more traditional sports, like hockey or baseball. Others were targeting their programming at specific groups to encourage them to get involved. Several communities, for example, had recreational programs specifically designed for young women.

The issue of having "nothing to do" came up in every youth focus group session regardless of whether it involved youth from large or small communities. After the participants told us there was nothing for youth to do, we asked them about the activities sponsored by the local municipality. Two responses were commonly given to our query. First, many of the youth focus group participants said that they didn't know about the recreational activities available to them. While some had seen the municipal brochures and pamphlets, few had paid much attention to them. Second, many stated that youth aren't interested in the types of activities municipalities are providing. Sports activities were singled out since these comprise the bulk of the activities available to young people. Many of the youth pointed out that "there is little for you to do if you are not a jock." Others said that young people get tired of traditional sports by the time they are 13 or 14 since some have been in organized sports from the age of 5 or 6.

When asked youth focus group participants what they wanted to do, the most common answer was "just hang out with other people our age and listen to music." We were told in many communities that high school dances provided the only opportunity to do this. We were told that these opportunities are limited, however, since many high schools only hold 3 or 4 dances per year.

1b. *Some implications of having "nowhere to go."*

The site visit data showed that the lack of things to do was an important concern related to having "nowhere to go" or a place of their own. Further, the issue of not having a place to go was linked to youth concerns about drug and alcohol use. Young people told us repeatedly that they just wanted to be with their peers, "hang out," and listen to music. They were not interested in participating in organized activities. They were also not interested in supervised events. Youth focus group respondents noted that young people have few places where they can go and just "hang out." Most go to their friends' houses where they watch videos or listen to music. The problem they noted was that this also resulted in a lot of apathy, lethargy and drug/alcohol use. Since young people feel that there is nothing to do and what there is costs money (movies, pool, bowling), hanging out and getting "loaded" is often seen as the only viable option. The use of alcohol and drugs was seen as a serious concern by a number of the young people we spoke with, including binge drinking and "bush parties." These findings were consistent across the larger and smaller communities we visited.

The discussion in the focus groups and face to face interviews with youth often turned to descriptions of what they would like to see for young people in their communities. A common response was having a place where young people can go, "hang out" with their peers and just listen to music - without being "hassled." Many mentioned successful "coffee houses" that had been run in their communities. Others dreamed out loud about youth-run, drop-in centres. Having a place to "just hang out" was key. One young person noted that we "wouldn't see many 19 year olds on the streets Friday night because they were all in the bars, having a drink and listening to music with friends. That's what adults do isn't it? We just want the same thing."

The young people talked about being with friends, listening to music and having a drink - fruit juice, soft drinks or coffee. A successful entrepreneur in a small western community tapped into this need by opening his coffee shop to young people on weekends. He hires local musicians and runs a "coffee house" for young people Friday and Saturday nights, after his regular customers are gone for the day. While the downtown location is small, the respondents reported that there is often a line up outside at eight o'clock.

1c. *Negative images of youth and being treated with respect.*

The discussion of having nowhere to go emphasized another serious concern raised by young people during the focus group sessions. Many were upset with the negative image of youth portrayed in the media. They said that these negative stereotypes have a serious impact on how they are treated in public places. Here the issues of having nothing to do and nowhere to go formed the backdrop to youth being treated poorly in their communities. Many young people reported having 20 minute curfews placed on them in restaurants and coffee shops. Others were angry about being asked to leave malls and other shops. A number noted that young people are treated poorly and with a lack of respect even though they are paying customers. Youth in one community actually did a survey of local businesses and published a list of which establishments were "youth friendly"!

A number of young people said they were tired of being looked at as criminals and thieves whenever they went to a mall or shop. Others pointed out that seniors spent hours in malls and coffee shops and weren't bothered by the owners at all. They resented this treatment and saw it as blatant discrimination. Some were angry that the positive things young people contribute to their communities are seldom highlighted but that all youth pay the price for the misbehaviour and criminal activities of a small minority of their peers.

The lack of respect reported by youth extended to the treatment they received in school and in agencies providing services to them. Several focus group participants gave examples of poor treatment at the hands of adults in positions of authority. Others noted that they were rarely consulted and even if consulted, their opinions were often ignored. This lead to a considerable amount of frustration and distrust of adults being expressed.

Focus group participants discussed how to improve the image that society has of young people. Some suggested working with the media to emphasize the positive contributions made by youth to their communities such as through the volunteer work that they do. Others pointed to events that recognise youth such as "Youth Week" where a community has an opportunity to promote its young people. In most cases, the young people felt that more had to be done to improve society's image of youth and to ensure that young people are treated with respect.

2. Communication

2a. Getting through to youth.

Exploring the issue of young people having "nothing to do" highlighted many of the other concerns they raised. As discussed above, having nothing to do is related to the lack of places for young people to go. As well, this issue emphasized the importance of communication, both with respect to how we identify youth concerns and how we provide information to them. The fact that few youth knew about existing recreational opportunities was not surprising. When we asked youth focus group participants to tell us how they would get the message out, we received a number of suggestions. First, we were told that young people would be more likely to pay attention to messages designed for them by other youth. They noted that adults should involve youth in designing posters and advertising campaigns aimed at other young people. They also suggested that we reach out and bring the messages to young people. While a standard brochure or newspaper-style mail out may reach adults, most young people ignore these forms of advertising. Youth focus group participants suggested using local media (radio and television) and producing "splashy" posters for advertising in high schools and other places where youth congregate. They also suggested tailoring the message to reach different segments of the youth population, including younger and older youth. A successful advertising campaign using these principals was described by one adult who indicated that a youth-designed campaign about a sexually transmitted disease had been extremely successful in the Yukon.

2b. Ways of hearing about youth concerns.

The respondents were asked to identify how adults learn about youth concerns in their communities. Answers to this question are presented in Table 2 below. Table 2 indicates that the respondents identified youth concerns through a variety of means. The method mentioned most often first was "through surveys and forums." This method was identified first by 34.6% of the respondents. This was followed by "through committees at the political level" with 28.8% of the respondents mentioning this first and "through interagency networks" mentioned first by 19.2% of the respondents.

Table 2:
Ways Of Identifying Youth Concerns

Ways of Identifying Youth Concerns	1st Way Mentioned (Number/Percent)	2nd Way Mentioned (Number/Percent)
1. Through committees at political level	28.8	32.7
2. Through interagency networks	19.2	16.3
3. Through front-line staff	13.5	18.4
4. Through surveys and forums	34.6	28.6
5. No systematic way exists	3.8	4.1
No Answer/Missing	0	3
Total	100% N=52	100% N=52

The second column of Table 2 indicates that adults find out about youth concerns "through committees at the political level." This was mentioned second by 32.7% of the respondents. This is the highest response category in this column. It was followed by "through surveys and forums" which was mentioned second by 28.6% of respondents, "through front-line staff" mentioned second by 18.4% and "through interagency networks" mentioned second by 16.3% of the respondents.

These findings indicate that some opportunities exist for both hearing the concerns of youth and involving youth in responding to these concerns. Many communities reported conducting surveys, needs assessments and holding community forums to address youth concerns. The site visits revealed that these were often one-time events which were usually motivated by a particular issue or event in a community. For example, several communities had held youth forums to address the issue of youth crime and violence. Surveys of youth interests were also common. These were often undertaken to assist municipal officials or youth-serving agencies in planning and service delivery.

The most common way youth-serving agencies learned about youth concerns was through front-line staff. This included two separate processes. First, many site visit participants indicated that young people are wary of adults. It takes time for a bond to be established and for adults to be trusted by some young people. In light of this, many agencies relied on their front-line staff to provide them with information about the concerns of young people in their programs.

We were told that front-line staff know the young people best and are trusted by them. The staff members talk to the young people in both formal and informal contexts and are in a position to both hear their concerns and discuss these with their superiors. In this way, the front-line staff can act as advocates for the young people they work with and bring their concerns forward. Many young people described the adults they work with as "youth friendly." They felt that the support and guidance provided by these "youth friendly" adults was crucial in helping them to get their voices heard.

The police officers we spoke with also said that they relied mostly on front-line staff to identify the concerns of the young people they work with. This was especially the case for those police officers working in schools. Many noted that there was no systematic way for them to hear from young people but many thought it was something they should consider since they devote a considerable amount of resources and provide important services to young people in their communities.

3. Participation

Many of the communities we visited had some form of youth involvement at the municipal level. This included formal opportunities such as having a Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee or having youth representatives on various municipal boards and committees. Several communities, for example, had youth representatives on committees addressing public safety issues. Others had youth on committees dealing with public transportation or parks and recreation issues. These were seen as appropriate since the activities of these committees could have a direct impact on young people who use these services. Less formal opportunities for youth participation were also discussed. For example, some front-line workers reported consulting with the youth they work with and involving them in planning and delivering recreational programs in their community centres.

Youth-serving agencies also reported a variety of ways of involving youth in their decision making processes. Some had formal youth representatives on their Board of Directors. Others involved youth on various committees which decided on programs and services provided to youth by the agency. Respondents from the policing sector indicated that young people are often involved in public safety committees or through other efforts such as high school Crime Stoppers programs.

4. Inclusion

Respondents from both the telephone interviews and site visits were asked whether they reached young people from all sectors of the youth population. Not surprisingly, many said they did not. While all said that they tried, they found it difficult to reach certain groups of young people, even if these groups varied. For some it was marginal youth while others found it difficult

to reach members of racial/ethnic groups. In other communities, Aboriginal youth were identified as difficult to reach.

A number of representatives of youth-serving agencies suggested that the heterogeneous nature of the youth population makes reaching them all a difficult challenge. They reported that different agencies attract different types of youth. Similarly, youth of different ages and different "youth" cultures are drawn to different types of activities and programs.

The respondents suggested that if communication with youth - finding out their concerns - rests on establishing ongoing contacts, some segments of the youth population will not have as great an opportunity of being heard since they do not get involved with agencies or in traditional programs offered to young people. The same can be said for youth having opportunities to get involved and participate in their communities. The young people who are interested in this type of activity usually find a way to get involved and have their voices heard. For many young people, however, such opportunities do not exist. Many marginal youth do not trust adults and are uncomfortable getting involved in "adult" processes such as going to meetings and voting on motions. Many respondents suggested that youth-based models had to be used to attract a broader range of participants from all sectors of the youth population.

5. Ideal Models

The final issue to be examined is the one which underscores this entire discussion. Respondents were asked to identify the strategies they would recommend for enhancing youth participation and involvement in their communities. They were asked to think about an ideal model for youth participation in their particular community. The answers to these questions are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 shows that most respondents identified a combination of three different elements for promoting youth participation in their communities. The response mentioned first most frequently was "through local level and youth-run initiatives." This was identified first by 38.5% of respondents. This was followed by "through the political level" mentioned first by 30.8% and "through a combination of political, interagency and local levels" mentioned first by 15.4% of respondents.

Table 3:
Ideal Strategies For Involving Youth

Strategies For Involving Youth	1st Strategy Mentioned (Percent)	2nd Strategy Mentioned (Percent)
1. Through the political level	30.8	27.3
2. Through the interagency level	11.5	34.1
3. Through the local level and youth-run initiatives	38.5	22.7
4. Through a combination of political, interagency and local levels	15.4	0
5. Through school based initiatives	3.8	15.9
No Answer/Missing	0	8
Total	100% N=52	100% N=52

The second column in Table 3 shows the frequencies for the second strategy mentioned. In this case, the most frequent response was "through the interagency level" mentioned by 34.1% of those answering. This was followed by "through the political level" which was identified by 27.3% of respondents followed closely by "through local level and youth-run initiatives" which was reported by 22.7%% of respondents.

These responses were explored during the site visits. Several key issues were considered. For example, many respondents felt that you had to start with a real issue for people at the community level, including the young people in that community. If you don't have a meaningful issue, your attempts at organising and mobilising either adults and youth will be hampered. Many respondents indicated that you have to go out to the people and listen to their concerns before you do anything else. Correspondingly, many respondents indicated that people will be much more likely to support your actions and get involved if they see their concerns being addressed.

This is crucial with respect to youth participation. As noted above, many young people are wary of adults and adult processes. Many feel that adults spend a great deal of time talking and discussing issues while actually doing little about them. Young people are much more "action" oriented than adults and want to see the results of their efforts. Many youth see endless meetings which do not result in any action, as a waste of time and effort. Addressing local needs and concerns in a meaningful and timely way was seen as a positive strategy for generating interest, support, and participation, especially among the youth of a community.

Another issue related to working at the local/community level was that this is the site for programming and resources in most communities. In particular, community centres and agency offices are located in specific communities and usually draw their clients (youth) from the surrounding area. Resources and programs are usually designed to address the particular needs of these young people. Contact is also made with young people by front-line staff in these locations. For these reasons, the community level was seen as a pivotal element in the ideal model of youth participation identified by many respondents.

The political level was also seen as crucial in an ideal model of youth participation. Many respondents suggested that the political level was essential for legitimising youth participation in a community. The existence of a Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee, for example, was seen as sending a strong message about the importance of hearing youth concerns and involving them in the decision making process. Many respondents indicated that access to power and financial resources was also enhanced as a result of youth involvement at the political level.

The contribution of the political level was not seen as entirely positive, however, since many respondents were worried about the consequences of political level involvement. Some of the questions raised in this regard were related to the selection process. Specifically, there was some concern that only a certain segment of the youth population would be invited to participate at the political level. Others were critical of the lack of power usually associated with a formal committee noting that such groups usually operate only in an advisory capacity. Some of the young people who took part in this study were members of existing political level youth groups. Several expressed their frustration over the lack of action on the concerns that they had raised. Others questioned the role they could play in the political process. For some, this had not been clarified and they were not sure what rights and responsibilities they had. For others, the difficulty was being in an advisory position when they wanted to actually do something about youth issues.

A third concern raised about the political level was that it benefited adults more than youth. Youth Advisory Councils were seen as providing politicians with more than they provided to the youth involved. While positive press about involving youth showed that the politicians were interested in youth concerns, many young people and youth-friendly adults were worried about a potential for tokenism and a lack of meaningful involvement for youth in these types of situations. In particular, they were worried that a lack of tangible results from these groups would be seen by young people in the community as just another example of why youth can't trust adults.

The role of the political level and the challenges inherent in emphasising this level in youth participation strategies was most clearly expressed in the experiences that many Canadian communities have had with skateboard parks. The issue of skateboarding and building skateboard parks was an issue in almost all of the communities we visited and in most of those included in the telephone interviews. The successful examples we were given included stories of how groups of young people and their adult supporters had lobbied local governments and convinced them to build expensive skateboard parks. Many of these successful initiatives included a management committee comprised of both youth and adults, with the young people playing key roles. The successful stories also included a primary role for youth in selecting the sites and designing the facilities.

The experiences of skateboarders, however, also shows how participation at the political level can lead to unintended and undesirable outcomes. In some communities, young people and their adult supporters are extremely frustrated by the lack of alternative recreation opportunities including facilities for skateboards, BMX bicycles and roller blades. While the young people involved in these activities are ordered off public property (sidewalks, parks, bicycle paths), few venues exist for them to pursue their interests. In some communities, public presentations have been made and meetings held with little action being taken. In other communities, promises have been made with little visible action after several years have passed. Both young people and adults in these communities have found the experience very frustrating. As a result, many youth have been "turned off" to further involvement at the political level in these communities.

The third strategy identified by respondents was using the interagency level as a means of both reaching young people and linking them to decision makers. As noted above, many see their front-line staff as the best way to communicate with youth. They also see agency staff as advocates for the concerns of youth. Many respondents suggested that by working together, members of the youth-serving community can promote youth participation in their own organizations as well as in the wider community. They can secure both needed resources and opportunities for youth participation. Many respondents saw the need for an interagency component in an ideal model of youth participation.

Exploring these issues with respondents during both the telephone interviews and site visits revealed that there were no specific "best practices" models of youth participation. Instead, respondents suggested that each community has to develop according to its own needs and with available resources - both human and financial. They did, however, identify a number of common structural features and processes which they felt were essential in an ideal youth participation model. For example, a number of respondents argued that you need to have some involvement at all three levels of a community - the local, interagency and political - in order to keep youth participation on the public agenda. Working on one area alone was seen as insufficient and potentially limiting to the institutionalisation of youth participation.

Another structural feature was the need for a "champion" in the community as well as a group of "youth friendly" adults to promote youth participation. Since youth is a transitory phase in the life cycle, and youth leaders are constantly moving on to new things, these adults are seen as playing an important role in providing youth participation efforts with sustainability and continuity. These adults also promote the issue of youth participation with the public and advocate with and on behalf of youth.

Leadership was seen as a critical factor for both youth and adults. Time and again, we were told about the need for "youth friendly" adults to provide support, mentoring and guidance as opposed to the supervision and control that youth usually get from adults. We were told that adults need to learn how to do this and that young people have to be trained in leadership skills. Youth leaders were seen as especially important since their involvement was seen as a way of influencing and encouraging other youth to get involved in their communities.

6. A Comparison of Responses From Larger and Smaller Communities

One of the criteria used for selecting communities for telephone interviews was that both large and small communities be included. We also chose communities from different regions of the country. These criteria also informed the selection of communities for site visits. We identified larger communities as those with a population of 50,000 or more while smaller communities had a population which was less than 50,000. Using this definition, 27 of the communities participating in telephone interviews were classified as larger while 25 were classified as smaller communities. The findings from these two groups of communities were compared according to the key issues examined above.

An interesting difference was noted with respect to the identification of youth concerns by adults participating in the telephone interviews. In this case, a total of 58.3% of the respondents from the smaller communities mentioned "nothing to do" first as a youth concern. This was followed by "respect/being heard" mentioned first by 12.5% of the respondents from smaller communities. The comparable percentages for the respondents from larger communities were 29.6% who mentioned "future/jobs" first, followed by 25.9% who identified "nothing to do." While 18.5% of the respondents from larger communities mentioned "crime/violence" first, only 4.2% of the respondents from smaller communities gave this as their first answer.

The most frequent category mentioned second by respondents from smaller communities was "nothing to do," with 20.8% giving this answer. This was followed by 16.7% who mentioned "future/jobs" second. In comparison, 23.1% of the respondents from larger communities mentioned "future/jobs" second while 15.4% mentioned "nothing to do" and 15.4% said respect/being heard" second.

Differences between larger and smaller communities were also noted with respect to how they identified the concerns of their young people. In this case, 37.0% of the respondents from larger communities said that they learned about the concerns of their young people through municipal level contact while an additional 25.9% said they used surveys and youth forums. The respondents from the smaller communities relied more heavily on surveys and forums with 44.0% giving this response followed by 20.0% who said through municipal contacts and an additional 20.0% who mentioned learning about youth concerns through contact with youth-serving agencies.

Finally, a comparison of responses to the question about "ideal strategies" revealed that 40.7% of the respondents from larger communities gave working at the local level as their first response. This was followed by 22.2% who identified the political level and an additional 22.0% who said a combination of levels was needed. In comparison, 40.0% of the respondents from smaller communities mentioned working at the political level first followed by 36.0% who said the local level.

The pattern reflected in these findings suggests that adults in larger communities see youth concerns about the "future and jobs" as most important followed by youth concerns regarding "nothing to do." For adult respondents in smaller communities, having "nothing to do" is of much

greater concern being mentioned by almost 5 times more respondents than "respect/being heard" which was the next largest category.

The findings from the site visits indicated that young people in both types of communities are concerned about having "nothing to do." One of the differences was that there were more programs and opportunities for youth in larger centres but this was offset by the fact that there were many more young people there. Despite having more opportunities, young people in larger centres also felt that there was "nothing to do" for youth in their communities.

The challenge in smaller communities involved finding the resources to do things and then motivating people to get involved. Respondents from smaller communities often worked together to address community-wide issues involving youth. In larger communities, this co-operation was found in the efforts of interagency committees. These committees formed around specific issues, client groups or service areas (i.e. different parts of a large city). They had the effect of creating a "community of interest" similar to that found in many smaller communities.

The other observation that can be drawn from the site visit data is that larger communities have been involved in youth participation activities for a longer period of time. This was especially the case with respect to youth involvement at the municipal level since most of the larger communities had had a Mayor's Advisory Councils for some time. Community development strategies were common in both larger and smaller communities. As well, the informal type of youth involvement at the agency level was similar in both larger and smaller communities. Both relied on front-line staff to identify youth concerns.

Conclusions:

This study was designed to identify three or four "best practices" models of youth participation and involvement. The findings showed that while such "best practices" models may exist in theory, a much more complex set of structures and practices exists in reality. Several key structures and processes were identified which could guide communities in developing their own "ideal" youth participation models. Most respondents agreed that a combination of local, interagency and political level structures were required for a successful and sustainable youth participation strategy. Many also felt that youth leaders should be identified and encouraged to participate. Young people need training and experience which is often best provided by "youth friendly" adults in a supportive and mentoring context.

Some of the most successful examples of youth participation we discovered in the course of conducting this study incorporated these structures and processes. That is, they youth participation activities underway at the local, interagency and political levels. "Youth friendly" adults were involved in providing support and guidance to youth leaders who were drawn from among a larger body of youth participants. In these communities, examples existed of successful community-level involvement by young people. In addition, these community initiatives were often supported by an interagency network which provided resources and training as well as young people interested in getting involved. Many of the most successful communities also had some form of youth participation at the political level. And while there was considerable frustration related to this, most young people and adults involved recognized the importance of this level of participation for both its symbolic and material value.

Appendix A

A List of The Communities Selected for Telephone Interviews and Site Visits

A List of Communities Selected for Telephone Interviews

Cape Breton Regional Municipality, NS	Thunder Bay, ON
Barrington, NS	Waterloo, ON
Amherst, NS	North Bay, ON
Charlottetown, PEI	Regina, SK
Moncton, NB	Portage la Prairie, MB
Fredericton, NB	Yorkton, SK
Ste Julie, PQ	Edmonton, AB
Quebec City, PQ	Calgary, AB
Verdun, PQ	100 Mile House
Sherbrooke, PQ	Victoria, BC
Aylmer, PAQ	Vernon, BC
Baie Comeau, PQ	Fort St. John, BC
West Carleton, ON	Vancouver, BC
Windsor, ON	White Horse, YK
Hearst, ON	Yellowknife, NWT

A List of Communities Selected for Site Visits

Amherst, NS	Edmonton, AB
Charlottetown, PEI	Spruce Grove
Moncton, NB	Calgary, AB
Ste Julie, PQ	100 Mile House
Quebec City, PQ	Vancouver, BC
Verdun, PQ	White Horse, YK
Thunder Bay, ON	Yellowknife, NWT
Regina, SK	

Appendix B

Telephone Interview Guide

Revised Telephone Interview Guide

Introduction

This study is designed to help us identify successful initiatives that involve young people in addressing such concerns as family violence, substance abuse, racism and issues you face in recruiting and involving young people in community-based programs. How have you overcome these challenges? What successes have you achieved? What issues still require work? Your answers to these and other questions will be useful to communities who are interested in developing their own youth participation initiatives. We are interested in your experiences. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The results will be presented in aggregate form and no individuals will be identified. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can quit at any time. However, we hope you will agree to complete this interview and share your knowledge on this important topic.

1.	I'd like to check on the information I have about you and your organization: Name: Title: Telephone Number: FAX Number:
2.	What is your occupation?
3.	How long have you been in this position? (number of years)
4.	What is your major responsibility at work?
5.	What is the population of your community? (approximately)
6.	What percentage of the population in your community do you think is between 12 and 18 years of age? (approximate percentage)
7.	How would you describe your community? ❒ a large city ❒ a small city ❒ a town ❒ a village ❒ a rural area

8.	In your opinion, what are the three most important concerns currently being expressed by young people in your community? First Concern: Second Concern: Third Concern:
9.	Some communities use surveys or needs assessments to help them identify youth concerns. Other communities have such things as Youth Councils or Youth Forums. How does your community identify the concerns of its young people?
10.	How effective has this approach been in providing young people in your community a voice?
11.	Do young people in your community have a way of participating in the decisions that affect them? For example, can they participate in planning and delivering youth-focussed programs?
12.	In your view, what is the most extensive youth-focussed program currently running in your community?
13.	Can you tell us how involved young people are in this program? (Do they help to identify issues, plan and deliver programs)?

14.	Do you reach/involve young people from the different segments of the youth population in your community?
15.	Do you do anything to ensure that young people who do participate have an opportunity to do so in a meaningful way? For example, are the young people given any training to help them take part in formal meetings? (training/resources such as bus fare/when meetings scheduled)
16.	Are there any youth-focussed programs in your community designed specifically to address youth concerns with crime, family violence, racism etc.?
17.	Are there any benefits in involving young people in community initiatives?
18.	What are the challenges to involving youth in community initiatives?
19.	What would be the best way of involving young people in your community in crime prevention or other community-based programs?

Appendix C

Site Visit Summaries

Moncton	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview: City Staff	1. Nothing to do. 2. Don't get respect 3. Poor image	• Youth on Public Safety Committee • city staff facilitate youth voices • held forum on violence • completed survey • Voices Project with CPRA	• need Mayor's Advisory Council • could branch out and provide training to youth • also provide infrastructure
Focus Group : Police	1. violence/sexual assault 2. no place to go 3. drugs/alcohol	• rely on contact with SRO's • no formal mechanism	• tap in through schools • identify their interests • involve youth this way
Interview: Youth - (female 18)	1. no place to go 2. adults look down on them 3. adults don't respect them for what they do	• need to speak with right people • outreach worker trusted • annual meeting called • advertise in high school	• have a Youth House • elect President, Vice-president, secretary, etc.
Interview: Youth - (male 16)	1. money and jobs 2. not enough freedom 3. not enough to do 4. drugs/alcohol	• no youth council • student council looks after needs • lots of sports, little culture (art) • need opportunity to travel	• do an assessment • establish a board of directors • select 5 to 10 youth from different areas of town • make it accessible to youth
Interview: Youth - (male 19)	1. money 2. relationships 3. what's happening in society 4. not much to do	• voices not heard • not clear on information • maybe have a youth information line	• use schools to call meetings • call city wide meeting • use incentives to get youth involved e.g. meet sports stars
Interview: Youth - (female 17)	1. failure rate in school 2. transportation an issue 3. youth know their issues, adults don't listen	• not much of a voice • no one listens • need to publicise activities better • use media to reach youth involve youth in designing messages	• conduct polls with students to see what they want • not just a set committee, involve many youth • need a youth club run by youth

Moncton	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview; Boys and Girls Club (East) Staff	1. need opportunities 2. teens not treated as young adults at stores 3. adults see youth as a pain	• had meetings about school program • hard to get youth involved, they're shy • hear voices through front line workers	• community specific • build tools and capacity • tailor to local needs
Interview ; Boys And Girls Club (West) Staff	1. fitting in 2. money, finances (future) 3, dating and relationships	• contact with front line workers • have meetings • youth tell her everything • have "Program committee" meeting • Board of Directors has youth representatives • Leadership Groups decides on things	• not Mayor's Council because we need to give people tools and opportunities • CHOICES program • HEADSTART program • community development • from the "ground up" • interagency committees

Charlottetown	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: City Staff And Representatives From Youth Serving Agencies	1. have a place youth can go to 2. respect 3. decision making, having a voice 4. not all youth are into sports 5. not enough diversity 6. need down time	• youth on Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee • Population Health Fund is setting up Island Youth Net • drop-in at Boys and Girls Club, youth on Board	• Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee exists • need a systematic communication strategy • adults present youth concerns to city • need youth connection • need interagency level • need political level
Focus Group: Youth Serving Agencies and Provincial Government Representative	1. respect 2. inclusion 3. being heard	• media is key to destroying attitudes regarding youth • need a youth net • a national profile • health promotion will work because youth want to hear about teen pregnancy, employment, training, etc.	• need policy and legislation • 2 levels Macro example was Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence, has youth representatives • need a champion • develop Federal/ Provincial/Territorial working group • Micro- do community development and hear youth at local level
Focus Group : Police	1. nothing to do 2. everybody is down on them 3. drugs and alcohol	• key is to identify leaders • no systematic way to dialogue • they didn't know about Mayor's committee • youth don't have a voice	• need interagency co-operation • youth don't have faith in the system • select youth through education system and social services system
Interview: Youth - (male 17)	1. future jobs 2. how they are going to get through college 3. fair treatment of youth needed	• no voice, not taken seriously • those not heard will do it on their own • an underground magazine • adults don't think young adults have enough life experience	• has to be a concerted effort not individual agencies • youth have to be listened to more • involve youth committee in how things are run • publicise existence of youth committee

Charlottetown	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview: Youth - (female 17) Boys and Girls Club (member)	1. not enough to do 2. no place to go (only small drop-in at Boys and Girls Club) 3. schooling	• usually through an adult • front line staff • had drop-in but had trouble so someone had to be held accountable	• have a bigger place • have more activities going on • suggested concerts, bands
Interview: Youth - (male 17) Boys and Girls Club (member)	1. alcohol and drugs 2. relationships 3. nothing to do, things cost a lot	• people don't take them seriously • took a long time to get a skate park • formed a committee but really bugged youth because of lack of progress • bad news travels fast (harder to get good news out)	• need a permanent place to call their own • looking at Firehall • didn't know about Mayor's Advisory Committee • they never come down and talk to them • should have a direct link
Interview: Youth - (male 17) Boys and Girls Club (member)	1. cliques in town (sports) 2. what they'll do on weekends 3. issues at home	• a few get heard • more popular youth get heard • should call meeting to hear voices • thinks they need a place	• heard about Mayor's Advisory Council but not what they do • call a meeting to hear voices • believes people would get involved

Amherst	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview: City Staff	1. nothing to do 2. not listened to 3. crime/alcohol	• had 2 youth forums • survey of 1000 youth • trying to establish a youth council • Project Echo -Youth Services Canada • a youth resource centre • trying to have youth on Board of Directors	• establish Youth Resource Centre • many youth serving agencies involved • political level already involved
Focus Group: 14 Representatives From Youth Services Community	1. nothing to do 2. the future 3. don't have a voice 4. no place to go	• held forums and survey • involved youth on Board of Directors • rely on contact with youth frontline agencies • use leadership training and provide opportunities • talk about issues to frontline staff	• heavy emphasis on political level coupled with interagency co-operation and a youth centered place i.e. Resource Centre which involves youth and provides agencies with a vehicle • need champion • need training • need to advertise
Focus Group: Amherst Youth	1. no place to go 2. not much to do if you don't have money 3. transportation 4. alcohol/drugs	• talk about issues to front-line staff at Echo • planning a youth board at Echo • need to get message out to youth, have youth involved • youth willing to participate	• need training • could entice them through music advertising, etc.

Regina	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: City Social Development Staff	1. jobs/future 2. issues for aboriginal youth 3. no safe house in Regina	• hear from frontline staff • many organizations are adult only, should have youth input • youth need representation • need awareness • use surveys and program evaluations • there are opportunities but the adults need to listen • youth on Crime Prevention Advisory Committee	• have a mixed model • have a champion in town re: street kids • youth driven projects work best when there are specific issues • doing a Community Mobilization/inter-agency effort, 35 agencies involved • problem with Mayor's Council is equality, youth can't compete with adults
Focus Group: Youth At Rainbow Youth Centre	1. nothing to do, money, and transportation 2. no where to go 3. have centre but some won't go 4. have a skate park and BMX too	• can't get voices heard • have awards for youth but don't get much attention • had a Mayor's "Youth Week" but not taken seriously • have student council • Rainbow Youth Centre Friday night circles	• For and By Youth initiatives needed • need extensive and appropriate advertising • learn how to work with others and group dynamics at Rainbow • builds confidence they can't do it for themselves

Regina	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview : Rainbow Youth Centre Staff	1. needs things to do 2. safe place 3. resources that are consistent and sustainable	• some problems with youth on Boards because they don't realise the commitment • Peer Helper Program a main way of involving youth • adults have responsibility to assist and guide • had youth day presentations	• need political level support • multi sectoral involvement needed • Child Advocate has a youth council so has United Way but these are movers and shakers • need adult support and co-ordination for youth involvement component to work
Focus Group ; Police	1. jobs and high unemployment 2. peers 3. nothing to do 4. nowhere to go	• they get information from teachers, parents • lots of one on one • continuity really helps • communicate in a variety of ways with different groups of youth • should have conferences	• Education, Social Services, Health, Police all have a role to play • need to have strong partnerships • already cooperage on programs, e.g. summer camp • involve Elders

Thunder Bay	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: City Staff	1. employment 2. nothing to do 3. safety, crime violence	• have neighbourhood facilities • youth leaders important • partnerships with youth agencies and with youth • health unit just did an extensive "report card on children's health" • Health Canada guide for youth participation would be helpful	• guidance not supervision • strategy includes: an articulated set of roles, a sense of where you're going, and principles of how to work with people • community development process • Youth Plan exists • bring agencies together once a year • put programs in high need neighbourhoods
Focus Group: Pro Kids Program Staff and Police Officer	1. no opportunities for youth in needy communities	• did a community consultation to establish community fund for youth • Youth Zone operates 5 drop in sites	• Pro Kids has 100 community Partners • provides youth an opportunity to be involved in Arts, Culture and Sports • put resources into needy communities through community centres
Focus Group: City Staff	1. no place to go 2. respect, youth not listened to 3. youth need a chance to participate	• reach youth in programs but hard to reach others • did a special program for youth they weren't reaching • get to leaders of youth subgroups • held community meetings (at housing projects) • hire young adults as workers • held a youth forum	• political level is important • work with youth that come out then reach out to others • you need "connected" people (champions) • need neighbourhood centres where multiple services could be offered • like wraparound concept

Thunder Bay	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Youth Serving Agencies Including Boys And Girls Club, Youth Employment and Housing	1. chance to be involved 2. consistency and continuity 3. relationships at home and with peers	• rely on front line workers • hot breakfasts and lunch to do outreach • plan an activity and approach youth informally • did surveys and sent information to provincial level • Y.E.S. youth produced a newspaper • changed advertising and signs	• need consistency • can't start and stop • use a wraparound process • youth network being developed • will have forums to talk about issues at Federal/Provincial levels • use "Pied Piper" approach to reach leaders who then attract others
Focus Group: 10 Youth From Different Community Centres Around The City And From Pro Kids	1. not enough to do 2. schools cut traditional sports -few alternative activities 3. school 4. people are poor 5. transportation	• student council doesn't really listen • organized Black Sheep Group to get skateboarding • need high school sessions	• talking about forming a youth council • need trust of youth • need a consistent leader • youth participation means different things to youth of different ages

Whitehorse	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview : City Staff	1. abuse 2. unemployment 3. family issues (alcohol/drugs)	• no institutionalised way • lots of groups saying we should have youth representatives at the table • youth forum would work because it could provide trained youth • went through a big effort to get youth involved • have to have separate space and allow groups to be comfortable	• step by step with support • leadership, mentoring and guidance not supervision • working with municipality to establish committee • provide some training • youth forum could make trained youth available to community groups who want youth representatives
Interview: City Staff	1. empowerment and inclusion 2. image of youth 3. barriers such as transportation, money, 4. alternative recreation	• working on White Horse Youth Strategy • successful because they involved youth in design, delivery and creation of strategy • worked with Positive Action for Yukon Youth Coalition (PAYY) and Youth Empowerment Success (YES)	• did a community inventory • consultation with youth (focus groups) • used youth facilitators • report approved by Council • looking at alternate service delivery, youth centres and how to involve youth in municipality
Interview: PAYY Coalition Staff Member	1. things to do 2. transportation 3. drugs/alcohol	• he's doing community visits and talking about how to engage youth • some Parks and Recreation boards have youth • First Nations Community have Youth Councils	• start with an issue • supporting and mentoring is key • communities don't know how to do it • need to identify and pay youth leaders

Whitehorse	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview: PAYY Coalition Staff Member *(continued)*		• informal channels really big in small communities • did Yukon Youth Leadership Project modelled on Manitoba sports camps	• leaders draw others • youth for youth will make it successful • adult guidance is key as is continuity
Focus Group: Representatives of Youth Justice, RCMP Crime Prevention and Youth Investment Fund	1. nothing to do 2. no where to go 3. no money	• nothing formally in place • informally lots of interagency consultations • plans for an advisory group for RCMP as well as for Territory • hard to establish a body that is representative • Youth Investment Fund has lots of youth input	• in Yukon you need government help • need political level • have a youth strategy to have more involvement • need all departments to work together • need intermediate level e.g. where do they take PAYY Coalition (interagency initiative)
Interviews: Youth At Youth Conference In Whitehorse	1. nothing to do (boredom) 2. not enough positive role models 3. jobs 4. poor image 5. transportation 6. don't know what is available, need better communication	• serious communication problem • there are some venues for youth participation but difficult • lack ways to engage youth • youth conferences held but are we really catering to adults • church groups exist too • youth for youth group exists • have youth on recreation board • youth friendly adults help to	• identify youth groups like PAYY and church • pull them together • identify a range of activities for each group of youth • create a youth directorate • political link • adults play advisory to youth but remain behind the scene • youth board across Yukon like Women's Directorate

100 Mile House	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Police, Education Officials	1. nothing to do 2. nowhere to go 3. drugs and alcohol	• people rely on their own perceptions of youth concerns • patrol officers have contact with youth • city council sensitive to youth issues, e. g. skateboard park • tried to get a skateboard park going • need workers to connect with youth at their level	• forming a community-based committee • need to work together • need to reach youth to get them to buy-in • doing community mobilisation through town hall meetings • talking about a youth fair to garner interest
Focus Group: Representatives from Community Agencies	1. youth suspended from school and hanging around downtown 2. drugs and alcohol 3. nothing to do 4. a place for youth needed	• you need to reach them to communicate • no systematic way exists • need to get and use youth input	• expensive to offer programs • youth don't vote or pay taxes, so gives them little power • do short term projects to see if they can achieve something • having a structure in place is an end in itself • start slow and see how partners will contribute • need interagency level
Focus Group: Youth	1. school 2. nothing to do 3. drugs and alcohol	• they know that different groups of youth are involved in different things • communicate with friends, so need to tap into networks	• get leaders of each group of youth involved • use friendship networks • identify youth issues and them try to do something about them

Vancouver	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: City Staff and Child and Youth Advocate	1. employment 2. housing 3. respect, being heard 4. transportation 5. no alternative recreation like skateboarding and raves (late night) youth forums	• Mayor's Coalition on Crime Prevention and Community Safety • Have representatives on Community Centre Assoc., a separate elected body from municipal government • also heard through agencies • Vancouver Youth Voices • also youth for youth groups e.g. Environmental Youth Alliance • late 80's Mayor's Task Force on Children and Youth a catalyst	• civic youth strategy is in place • have youth council in community centres • constructed Crime Youth Strategy • use community development process • tend to partner and go to council together • have an interagency network • mentoring and support process • Children and Youth Advocate
Focus Group: Youth Driven Agencies	1. homelessness 2. poverty 3. substance abuse	• have youth for youth organizations • work with coalition of youth serving agencies • have youth "friendly" adults who provide support and access to "power" • did a youth pot luck • do outreach and advertise	• power provides opportunity and funding support • instigated by a core youth group • have youth at table who work in organizations • Vancouver Youth Voices does advocacy training • need to teach adults how to work with youth

Vancouver	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Civic Youth Strategy Core Committee	1. media plays up safety issues 2. ethnic youth will not participate 3. feel youth are silenced 4. lack of jobs 5. drug and alcohol services for youth 6. alternative recreation	• youth don't have a voice • especially marginal youth and ethnic youth • expect youth to know what is going on • youth recommendations not taken seriously • youth get mixed messages	• have Mayor's youth council • report once a year to Council on a range of issues • feel they have a voice • some people (adults) are really committed • need to have some consequences for adults for not following through. • pay youth to be peer counsellors
Focus Group: Youth from Environmental Youth Alliance	1. economic issues, affordable housing, poverty, meaningful work 2. access to power, some sort of voice 3. respect for their organization	• communicate with youth through staff • youth driven organization • youth situation same as women's movement was 20 years ago • their programs connect them to the community • maintaining the relationships is really important to youth • process is important (Gardens example shows its not product alone but experience that is also important)	• give people opportunities • non-hierarchical organization structure • empower individuals • see results of their efforts • make the structure transparent • have adult mentors and do workshops • trying to refine skills of non-governmental organizations and transfer them to youth • profile them, train them, link them

Calgary	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview: City Staff	1. transportation, not knowing what's available 2. youth not taken seriously 3. youth want to be heard and involved	• youth week was held • have 2 partners around table for youth week • in 5 years Youth Week will be youth driven • Marlborough Mall example of business link	• have a civic strategy developing • have a corporate strategy developing • have a Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee • 30 youth selected from throughout the city
Focus Group: Police School Resource Officers And Youth Involvement Program Reps	1. fitting in 2. no faith in adults 3. social life, what's going on	• through front-linestaff • not systematic • have a Youth Involvement Program • police driven peer program	• city strategy on youth in place • do a community consultation • need meaningful involvement for youth • identify youth leaders and work with them
Interview: Representative of United Way Action Committee Against Family Violence	1. youth want to be involved 2. violence is a concern 3. lack of housing	• did a community consultation • encourage programs that involve youth, Building Blocks, Peer Helpers, anti-violence, mentoring • trying to involve diverse youth • need a pool of potential candidates to sit on committees • youth publicised programs and kicked off campaign	• S.E.A.R.C.H. manual has key to involving youth • looking at how they involve youth on children and youth committee • need to operate at all 3 levels • political level lends legitimacy, puts youth involvement on map • issue is interagency network
Interview: Representative of Calgary Achievement Centre For Youth		• this is a centre where services provided by multiple agencies • tried a youth advisory council but it didn't work • hard to get a stable group of youth	• missing umbrella group in the city • CACY works because it's a concept not an entity

Calgary	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview: City Staff	1. nothing to do 2. no place for youth 3. don't meet need of certain youth, e.g. Aboriginal youth	• did a community consultation • youth driven magazine to publish directory of youth services: • Youth Week as public expression of support for youth	• working on Corporate Plan for City • lots of interagency work going on • need communication with the city and with interagency network
Interview: Child Friendly Calgary Staff	1. nothing to do 2. no place for youth 3. transportation	• Youth Volunteer Corps has 400 members • Youth Foundation youth decide who gets grants	• have a Mayor's Advisory Council • get representatives from schools • last year no adult involvement in selection of 30 youth members • need to have buy in at all levels • Youth Volunteer Corps developing in local committees to address local youth need
Focus Group: Youth from Calgary Youth Foundation; Youth Volunteer Corps, Building Blocks; Mayor's Youth Advisory Council	1. nothing to do 2. money 3. transportation	• feel they have a voice • schools have councils • have to let youth know that it is OK to get involved • if you don't get what you want, you have to fight for it • get a little guidance	• need leadership experience • Mayor's Advisory Council working on credibility now • need tangible results • Mayor's Advisory Council hasn't been doing what it would like to do

Edmonton	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Youth Serving Agencies	1. youth are mistrustful 2. community safety 3. boredom	• youth find it difficult to get involved and speak for all youth • police hear through community based efforts • use outreach to go to youth • if you don't have an issue youth won't come • did survey in N.E. • do outreach through youth groups • have information but don't have the skills they need to apply it • traditionally use scare messages • use Peer Education • Youth into Chat Line seen as an "on line" youth resource centre	• have Mayor's Advisory Committee • have an Interagency network in one quadrant of city, where services are focused • severai other examples in city of interagency co-operation • have a community league but a challenge to involve youth • grassroots approach is crucial • need a place to congregate and have youth agencies to be there • make it easy for youth to access • need buy in from institutions • also need to have the community behind you
Focus Group: Youth Representatives From Youth Options; Mayor's Youth Advisory Council; Teen Help Line; Peer Education	1. future 2. money 3. being listened to and respected 4. tired of having such negative views of youth	• hard to be heard • hardest to get through to business community and politicians • use fine arts as a medium e.g. theatre • hard to get funds without adults involved	• resource centre is a co-operative involving 15 to 20 organizations • skaters were successful • youth council is a challenge

Edmonton	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Youth Representatives From Youth Options; Mayor's Youth Advisory Council; Teen Help Line; Peer Education *(Continued)*		• word of mouth • have to get the attention of youth to have them involved (music or art) • incentives are useful	• so many organizations competing that one group had to close • need guidance and mentoring, with respect • adults should do their part • political level has a lot of clout • model from Toronto Student Alliance • chapters in each high school
Interview: Staff at Edmonton Kids In The Hall Project	1. need to be consistent when working with street involved youth	• 14 years experience with an interagency committee working with street involved youth • stress community development approach which involves hearing from youth themselves • get agencies to advocate on their behalf and facilitate their voices being heard	• Youth Advisory Council seen as a great idea • you're allowed to speak on a range of issues • need to work with frontline agencies who have credibility if you want youth to be involved • they provide training and support to youth
Youth Advisory Committee Meeting: Youth and City Councillor And Visitors	1. YAC members wanted to meet with City Councillor to get information about their role and the relationship to City Council	• some frustration voiced over lack of impact of YAC, wanted to see some results • discovered that they used to have a city councillor attend, no longer do	• need to clarify their role • many possibilities • they can advise as well as raise their own issues • suggestion was to identify an issue and move it through the political process • need to institutionalise and regularise their role

Spruce Grove	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Police	1. nothing to do 2. youth go to Edmonton for recreation 3. crime, alcohol (bush parties)	• have youth on a community advisory committee • have officers in schools • church groups have youth and meet regularly	• community advisory committee has youth on it • had places for youth but had to close because of problems • need to start at the elementary school level • identify and involve youth leaders • also need leadership from top down to support efforts • need interagency effort
Focus Group: Service Providers	1. nothing to do 2. drugs and violence 3. no money to do things with	• did a needs assessment in 1997 through health promotion • youth behaviour and addiction a concern • rely on agencies and organizations such as schools • last summer had volunteers running drop-in • not successful in reaching marginal youth • you need to reach out to youth, go to them	• grass roots involvement • peer initiatives is next level • youth need an advocate (a youth friendly adult) to guide them, and champion their cause • need interagency effort which will be the link to the municipality • need strong leadership and support

Yellowknife	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview : Side Door Youth Drop In Centre Staff	1. nothing to do 2. no where to go 3. drugs, alcohol, partying 4. transportation	• develops trust one on one • trying to expand and reach out • don't draw Aboriginal Youth • hard to reach lethargic party crowd • have a youth page in paper • held a youth forum in March	• take the time to get to know youth • drop-in had an Advisory Council but it broke down • he feels need to involve families • often acts as an intermediary between youth and families
Interview: Youth Volunteer Corps Staff	1. nothing to do 2. no place to go 3. educational opportunities are limited	• 150 youth involved • they conduct youth surveys • youth do presentations for funding • did a study called "Youth Friendly Yellowknife" to see which businesses were youth friendly and published the results • had a big community forum over youth curfew • did presentations for adult groups • regular communication processes needed	• have Youth Advisory Council • Generation "V" project on how to recruit youth volunteers and train adults and youth to work together • their YAC helps to sort through requests • help to decide on what to do, plan big recognition party • Yellowknife has youth on Boards and committees • youth going to conferences is not the answer • only involved few people • hard to get youth out to meetings

Yellowknife	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Interview: City Staff	1. nothing to do 2. not listened to, adults give lip service 3. adults try to force them into traditional boxes 4. youth are working at younger ages now 5. need different types of services, opportunities, not 9 to 5	• no systematic way • has asked youth in their programs • has sent out surveys to schools • youth can participate • Canada Games example of successful communication has lots of volunteers	• Mayor's Advisory council has just started • find leaders, involve them • need community level • political level will come later • missing link is how to get youth together with adults • have a youth recreation board linked to student bodies • establish grass roots level partners • need a champion • need effective advertising
Focus Group: Youth Members Of Mayor's Youth Advisory Council	1. nothing to do 2. alcohol/drugs (partying) 3. lack of money	• don't know about things to do • don't want to sign up for long term commitment • some will not get involved if things are run by adults • attracted by "cool" things • get "cool" group (leaders) involved and others will follow	• start by letting youth be heard more • provide the types of activities that will attract and involve youth • provide a place for youth • counter the negative stereotypes

Quebec City	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Police Officers	1. Drugs 2. Self-esteem 3. Nothing to do 4. Verbal violence more than physical violence	• Tables de Concertation exist in most of the neighbourhoods of Quebec City but youth do not participate as members, they are consulted • talk with young people when they patrol parks • work with youth-serving organizations to assess youth needs • *Project 691* –phone line where youth can leave confidential information concerning crime and violence • hold sessions in schools on specific problems in the school • street workers give information to the police on youth needs	• need to know what youth want to peek their interest and involve them • it is very difficult to have youth leading initiatives • skateboard park example showed that it is enough to get them involved • should not expect youth to organise • invite youth to comment on the activities planned by the tables de concertation • youth do not believe they can have an impact on municipal decisions • need continuity, a link with the community

Quebec City	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Youth	1. having fun 2. no commitment 3. need money 4. nothing to do	• youth have an opportunity to express their ideas on activities, especially at school • interesting projects have emerged such as « cabane à sucre » but it is always the same young people who are involved • The Service des Loisirs priorizes activities for younger kids • people do not listen to what the 16-18 year olds need • difficult to express needs to municipal decision makers • Young people believe that adults want to involve them to avoid troubles rather than to give access to what the kids like to do	• too many rules discourage youth from working with municipality • some initiatives at school but even the youth committee is not well known by the students • youth believe that their interests will only be considered if the Principal is open to their suggestions • adults should talk to youth about the future and the necessity of a good education • they spend too much time in school and do not believe that it prepares them for the work world • many young people ask adults to let them « tripper »

Verdun	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Police	1. Nothing to do 2. Crime and violence – ethnic street gangs, graffiti	• establish contact with youth through their jobs • meet youth in schools • organise lunch-time conferences and other activities such as a trip out of town, a basketball tournament in collaboration with a community organization, etc. • the « *maison des jeunes* » informs police about youth needs tries to address those needs. • needs assessments do not reflect the needs of all youth • needs identified by youth address only some of their needs	• problem with the double mandate of the police force : preventive and repressive • need collaboration between community organizations, police and municipality. • best projects are those providing physical activities with youth • adults should talk to youth at their level, with their own words • no permanent program for young people in the municipality. • Obstacles are political pressure, too many rules, administrative delays, communication, etc. • difficult reaching youth in need • have to involve parents

Verdun	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Youth	1. street gangs 2. peer pressure 3. money 4. nothing to do	• council at school a good vehicle for youth to express needs • students have obtained positive answer to some of their requests • do not wait for adults • youth should go to the municipality and express their own needs, sign petitions, etc.	• adults want to have too much control over youth • reward young people for their good moves rather than criticise them all the time. • young people (16 to 18) won't do a lot to obtain something from the municipality • Youth believe that adults have their own agenda, they want to do things for youth but insist on discipline and responsibility rather than on youth priorities, re: having fun

Ste Julie	Youth Concerns	Communication Strategies	Strategies for Involving Youth
Focus Group: Staff at Maison De Jeunes, Ste Julie	1. nothing to do 2. transportation 3. drugs and violence 4. family problems 5. money	• Ste Julie has a « *commission jeunesse* » which involve the municipality, police, school, health services. Youth aged 12 to 20 sit on the commission • youth surveys in school, health services • young people want a disco, transportation, an internet cafe, and free activities • activities provided by the municipality are limited to sports and do not meet other needs or interests • the workers of the « *maison de jeunes* » try to encourage youth to take control of their organization, to express their needs and to find solutions	• The « *maison des jeunes* » model has been created to involve youth in community life and to foster their participation in the decisions that affect them • three youth sit on the « *conseil d'administration* » and participate in deciding on the activities of the « *maison* » • there is also a youth committee where youth learn about democracy • ensure confidentiality and respect when working with youth • involving young people is a long term goal • youth want to be listened to and respected but are not necessary willing to participate in the organization of activities